



Manatees Winter in the Florida Keys



West Indian Manatees enjoy a plentiful food supply of aquatic plants. Please do not harass or feed manatees in the wild. For more information visit: www.floridamarine.org
(Photo: Florida Park Service)

In the winter season, Keys residents and visitors may encounter West Indian Manatees swimming leisurely along the shoreline. Because these air-breathing herbivores are listed as a federally endangered species, marine scientists from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) monitor their population levels and record all deaths and injuries due to boating accidents and natural causes. Manatees are slow-moving and therefore unable to swim quickly away from boats; the result is a collision that may cause injury or death to the manatee. In areas that are known manatee habitats, "no-wake" signs are posted requiring boaters to slow down and produce only minimal wake.

According to the FWC, there are several steps that you should take if you see a sick, injured, dead, or tagged manatee. Call FWC's Law Enforcement Hotline at 1-888-404-FWCC and give the location of the animal, whether it is alive, dead or injured, and how long you have been observing it. This information helps the FWC evaluate the situation.

Web Resources about Manatees

For more information, visit:

Manatee Biology, US Geological Survey Fact Sheet <http://www.fcsc.usgs.gov/manateeecology.pdf>

About Manatees Marine Lab http://www.marinelab.sarasota.fl.us/~jkoelsch/about_manatees.phtml

Sea World Manatee Conservation <http://www.seaworld.org/infobooks/Manatee/conservman.html>

The Bridge Marine Mammals <http://www.vims.edu/bridge/mammal.html>

Tracking Manatees http://cars.er.usgs.gov/basis/Manatee_Sirenia/2031/2031.html

West Indian Manatee

[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/.../FWS/West_Indian_Manatee_\(Florida\)/westindianmanatee_florida.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/.../FWS/West_Indian_Manatee_(Florida)/westindianmanatee_florida.pdf)

US Fish and Wildlife Service Manatee Recovery Sheet

<http://northflorida.fws.gov/Manatee/manatee-gen-facts.htm>

*Note: This article appeared in the Winter 2002 issue of the newsletter of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, **Sounding Line**. For more information, visit: floridakeys.noaa.gov.*